



# Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

January 2023

Pearson Edexcel Extended Project Qualification in  
Dissertation (P301)

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## **Grade Boundaries**

Grade boundaries for all papers can be found on the website at:

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## **Student Performance**

The range of titles sat well within the EPQ Dissertation Unit. Most candidates had chosen relevant, thought-provoking subjects. At the upper end of the mark range, work of impressive maturity was seen. Weaker performance was seen in cases where the choice of title lent itself to descriptive writing rather than engagement in argument and debate.

Some strong project work made effective use of a literature review to produce a synthesised analysis of source material, with in-depth investigation and good quality referencing. Weaker projects tended to include less effective source investigation, sometimes in the form of a list of sources with superficial evaluative comments. Learners should be encouraged to explore links between sources, rather than reviewing sources one at a time.

The structure of a Dissertation should be given consideration by learners. It is preferable to organise the final Dissertation into a single document rather than submitting discrete elements, as this encourages the learner to ensure that the work as a whole is coherently linked together.

Having a clear central focus for a Dissertation is important in distinguishing the work from a standard essay. The point of a Dissertation is to provide a research-based answer to a specific, open-ended question.

## **Suitability of Work Submitted**

The majority of submissions included formatted project proposal forms and activity logs with evidence of detailed planning and ongoing monitoring at the upper end of the range. The strongest projects were based on titles that had been refined to support engagement in argument, with weaker projects using titles that lacked focus. Many learners made use of a range of sources and included bibliographies and references in their work. There was an appreciation of the importance of engaging in argument and counter-argument. The majority submitted evidence of oral presentations, including slides, and many, though not all, accompanied this with an evaluation of the project process.

Some very lengthy Dissertations were submitted. Centres are reminded that it is estimated that the Dissertation produced will be 5000–6000 words in length.

## **Assessment Evidence**

In general, marking by teacher-assessors showed evidence of good understanding of how to apply the marking grids. There was evidence of internal standardisation but this was not always effective. Some use was made of annotation.

AO1 tended to be marked accurately although there was leniency in cases where there was not sufficient evidence of ongoing monitoring of the project process. There were significant discrepancies in the amount of detail included in the logs. Some were very reflective and thoughtful, but some learners wrote short, basic logs, listing activities completed rather than reflecting on problems encountered and solutions found. Logs do not need to be excessively long, but they should show evidence of reflection on the project process and ongoing monitoring. The project proposal form and activity log can be used to help ensure that Dissertation writing unfolds as a project process rather than simply being an essay-writing exercise.

In AO2, many learners presented bibliographies using a consistent format.

Primary research was sometimes used in ways that were inappropriate; it is difficult within the framework of the Dissertation unit to make use of questionnaire surveys in a rigorous fashion, though interviews can provide source material for discussion.

There was some use of videos and podcasts as research sources.

The evaluation of sources was not always strong. Learners should be encouraged to investigate their sources, establishing details about authorship or location of publication that can shed light on the source's objectivity and reliability. Comments about how useful a source is do not meet the requirements of AO2 with respect to consideration of reliability.

Automatic bibliography-building tools can be used to assist with reference construction.

In AO3, some excellent work was seen at the top end of the mark range, with evidence of in-depth, scholarly engagement with source material with the development of argument and counter-argument or the consideration of alternative interpretations. In weaker projects, the presentation of work was more essay-like and showed less evidence of the features of a Dissertation.

To support AO4 marks, most centres submitted Oral Presentation Records alongside written evaluations of the project process. As in previous years, some learners did not include much written evidence of evaluation of the project process and made some points on their slides. It is important that evaluation evidence is sufficiently detailed to meet mark band descriptors.

Centres are reminded that the evidence for AO4 (Review) comes from both the presentation and the evaluation of the project process. The quality of both of these should be considered when an AO4 mark is assigned.

### **Centre Performance**

Whilst some centres collated all work into a single document and uploaded it as a pdf, others presented a large number of separate files, sometimes in a variety of formats. Compiling the elements of a Dissertation where possible is preferable to submitting multiple separate sections.

Some submissions contained errors in the totalling of marks. There were also submissions that did not contain the requisite sample.

Centres are reminded that, provided the cohort is large enough, at least 10 projects should be submitted for moderation, even if the initially requested sample is smaller than 10, and that this must include the projects with the highest and lowest marks.

Careful checking of the accuracy of marking and the completeness of the evidence submitted, including signatures from learners and teacher-assessors, greatly aids the moderation process.

